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Options for the scope and methodology for a global sustainable development report

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 67/290 of 9 July 2013 on the format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

The report puts forward several options for the scope and methodology for a global sustainable development report. The options are based on responses from Member States and United Nations system entities to a questionnaire on the subject. They also draw on lessons learned from an exploratory, multi-stakeholder process to produce a prototype edition of a global sustainable development report, in order to illustrate the potential content and process for such a report.

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I. Context

1. The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 67/290 on the format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development. In paragraph 20 of the resolution, the Assembly decided that the forum should strengthen the science-policy interface by examining documentation, bringing together diverse information and assessments, including in the form of a global sustainable development report, building on existing assessments, enhancing evidence-based decision-making at all levels and contributing to the strengthening of ongoing capacity-building for data collection and analysis in developing countries, and requested the forum to consider, in 2014, the scope and methodology for a global sustainable development report, based on a proposal of the Secretary-General reflecting the views and recommendations of Member States, and relevant United Nations entities, including the Committee for Development Policy.

2. All Member States, political groups and all 53 United Nations organizations of the expanded Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs (ECESA plus) were invited to make proposals on the scope and methodology of a global sustainable development report, inter alia, through a questionnaire. The Secretary-General expresses his appreciation for their contributions to the present report. Responses were received from China, Costa Rica, Croatia, Indonesia, Japan, Jordan, the Russian Federation, Switzerland, Tunisia and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, from the European Union and from the Committee for Development Policy, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). Related inputs were considered from experts and United Nations partners who participated in expert group meetings, including from the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and from the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), UNEP and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

3. Section II draws lessons learned from an exploratory, multi-stakeholder process to produce a prototype edition of a global sustainable development report. Section III provides a synthesis of responses from Member States and United Nations system entities to a questionnaire on the subject, and section IV sets out recommendations for consideration by Member States.

II. Prototype edition of a global sustainable development report

A. Introduction

4. The concept of sustainable development has a very long history in science. As early as 1713, Hans Carl von Carlowitz referred to sustainable yield in the context of sustainable forestry management. In 1987, the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, entitled "Our common future" (A/42/427, annex), popularized the concept, which was subsequently adopted at the United

Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992, together with a set of Rio principles and a global action plan, Agenda 21,[1] which included many goals and targets, some of which became part of the Millennium Development Goals.

5. Scientific considerations and the work of scientists have become increasingly present in the sustainable development debate within the United Nations since the 1990s, especially owing to the efforts of academies of sciences to reconnect science with policy. For example, the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America created a Board on Sustainable Development in 1995, which sought to make the concept of sustainable development manageable and measurable by focusing on a minimal sustainability transition over two generations, until 2050.[2]

6. It should be noted, however, that the policy framework for sustainable development initially emerged with little basis in scientific considerations and the work of scientists. There were no scientists on the World Commission on Environment and Development and little representation of the scientific community or of the work of scientists at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992. At the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2002, there was some scientific presence. In 2012, scientists were among the most prominent groups at the side events for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. The Scientific Advisory Board of the Secretary-General, composed of 26 scientists, convened for the first time in January 2014.

7. Sustainability science emerged as a new interdisciplinary, unified scientific endeavour around the year 2000. It is a field defined by the problems it addresses rather than by the disciplines it employs. The number of authors who publish articles on the topic has doubled approximately every eight years since the early 1970s. In 2010, about 37,000 scientists from 174 countries wrote articles with "sustainable development" or "sustainability" in the title. In 2012 alone, according to Google Scholar, more than 150,000 such academic articles were published, six times more than 10 years ago.

8. However, to date, there is no comprehensive, authoritative global sustainable development report that brings together the range of existing assessments and that reviews global progress and future pathways in a truly integrated way, taking into account the perspectives of scientific communities across the world, despite the policy prominence of many topical assessments.

9. In 2012, the High-level Panel on Global Sustainability, in its final report in preparation for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "Resilient people, resilient planet: a future worth choosing" (A/66/700, annex) detailed the importance of basing policy on the best scientific evidence and called for a global sustainable development outlook report to bring together assessments across sectors in an integrated manner.

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[1] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992*, vol. I, *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex II.

[2] National Research Council, Policy Division, Board on Sustainable Development, *Our Common Journey: A Transition Toward Sustainability* (Washington, D.C., National Academy Press, 1999).

10. In the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Member States decided to establish a universal, intergovernmental high-level political forum on sustainable development which would, as one of its functions, "strengthen the science-policy interface through review of documentation, bringing together diverse information and assessments, including in the form of a global sustainable development report, building on existing assessments" (see General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex, para. 85 (k)).

11. In response, the Secretary-General tasked the Division for Sustainable Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to undertake in-depth analysis and evaluation of trends and scientific analysis in the implementation of sustainable development, including lessons learned, best practices and new challenges, and cross-sectoral analysis of sustainable development issues (see A/67/591, chap. III). Further details were provided in the revised programme budget adopted by the General Assembly at the end of 2012.

12. In early 2013, work began within the Division for Sustainable Development on a prototype edition of a global sustainable development report that could illustrate potential content, alternative approaches and various ways of participation, in order to support Member States' deliberations on the scope and methodology of future editions of the report. An executive summary was presented at the inaugural meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, held on 24 September 2013. Following further review, a comprehensive prototype report will be presented at the second meeting of the forum, in July 2014.[3]

B. Process

13. The prototype report is the result of the collaborative effort of many scientists, experts, United Nations staff and government officials.

United Nations system effort

14. The Division for Sustainable Development led the preparation of the prototype edition. It invited scientific communities and colleagues in the United Nations system to provide focused inputs to the report. The Secretary-General expresses his appreciation to the United Nations entities that have joined the effort to date: the Department of Economic and Social Affairs; the secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity, of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa and of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (the Rio Conventions); ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), FAO, IAEA, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNEP, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Population

[3] The report and background information for elements discussed in chapters II and III of the present report are available from http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/globalsdreport.

Fund (UNFPA), the World Bank and the World Food Programme (WFP). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) participated as an observer.

Consultations

15. In 2013, a series of eight expert group meetings and consultations were organized to support the preparation of draft chapters and to explore informal networks of scientific contributors. The meetings differed greatly in terms of content focus, geographic focus and meeting participants. One of the meetings, hosted by the Government of Croatia, resulted in the Dubrovnik Declaration, which provided a regional perspective on the science-policy interface for a sustainable future (A/C.2/68/8, annex).

16. The substantive starting point for the prototype report included existing scientific research and in-depth studies from a wide range of sources, including the large number of scientific contributions, issue briefs and official submissions prepared for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development; international scientific assessments; science-policy briefs of academies of sciences; institutional reports; Government-sponsored research; and national and regional sustainable development reports.

17. Views differed on the optimal approach to selecting contributing scientists for the report. In view of the limited time available, the Division for Sustainable Development approached scientists who had participated in recent initiatives implemented by the Division and scientists suggested by United Nations partners and by major scientific groups, notably the International Council for Science (ICSU) and the International Social Science Council.

18. To date, hundreds of contributors and reviewers from 46 countries have supported the report, including 57 staff members of the United Nations system, from 21 entities, 35 government officials, 2 major groups and 161 individual academics and scientists. Input has been received from 178 experts who had participated in a project of the Division in preparation for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development,[4] and an international team of young scientists and research students from several universities.

19. Many of the report's messages and findings were crowdsourced using web-based social science methods.[5] A multilingual crowdsourcing platform[6] was used to collect views from thousands of social and natural scientists, and a special effort was made to reach the younger generation.

20. The prototype report considered hundreds of assessments, including 57 international assessments suggested through the crowd-sourcing Website, 78 national sustainable development reports, 125 flagship publications of the United Nations system, 23 outlook reports prepared by intergovernmental organizations and more than 1,000 academic articles and think-pieces.

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[4] More information available from http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sd21.html.

[5] For further information on the methods used, see Matthew J. Salganik and Karen E. C. Levy, "Wiki surveys: open and quantifiable social data collection", 2 February 2012. Available from http://arxiv.org/abs/1202.0500.

[6] Inputs were made in Chinese, English and Spanish. In the future, a much wider range of languages might be used.

Contents and outputs

21. The prototype report includes a description of the landscape of sustainable development assessments; an assessment of progress in sustainable development since 1950; an analysis of global sustainable development scenarios (future pathways); a review of measures of progress, including official as well as big data approaches; a review of investment needs; science digests; and, as a special theme, case studies of the nexus between climate, land, energy, water and development in Australia, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Canada, Chile, China, Comoros, Cuba, Germany, India, Jamaica, Tarawa (Kiribati), Lithuania, Madagascar, Mauritius, Qatar, Seychelles, South Africa, the Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, the United Kingdom, Zanzibar (United Republic of Tanzania), the United States of America and in California (United States), and in the river basins of the Danube and the Nile.

22. In support of the report, the team developed two quantitative models: an open-source global climate-land-energy-water-development model that is being further developed to allow the development of sustainable development goal scenarios; and a stylized integrated tourism model especially suited for small island developing States.[3]

23. Contributors also provided support to ongoing capacity-building projects, which proved useful as inputs to the report. Others have worked on a geo-database for socioeconomic indicators. Work on quantifying innovative measures of progress continues.

C. Lessons learned for future editions

24. There are thousands of relevant scientific assessments at various temporal and geographic scales. Most of them focus on specific systems and sectors. For example, there are 1,023 assessments in the database of the assessment of assessments on oceans and 182 assessments at multiple scales in the database of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. These lists are growing and have to be updated on a regular basis.

25. Assessments differ greatly in terms of scope, scale, organization, process, participation, resources and perceived policy relevance (see table 1). Three broad groups can be distinguished: intergovernmental scientific assessments; scientific-technocratic assessments; and scientific research collaborations. When asked about their preferred assessment model for future editions of the report, experts typically suggested either the conventional United Nations model for flagship publications, a multi-stakeholder model with national contributions, or the model used by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Experts from developing countries tended to be more sceptical of the intergovernmental panel model, in view of its focus on peer-reviewed knowledge dominated by Western journals (accounting for 97% of the references in reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change).

Table 1
Typology of international sustainable development assessments

Type	*Examples*	*Description*	*Link to political process*	*Participants nominated selected by*	*Drafted by*	*Text approved by*	*Frequency*	*Normative or descriptive*	*Type of knowledge assessed*
Intergovernmental scientific assessments	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services	Regular intergovernmental scientific assessments	Formal	Governments	Scientists	Governments, peers	Regular	Primarily descriptive	Academic, peer-reviewed
	International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development	Ad hoc stakeholder, intergovernmental scientific assessment	Formal	Multi-stakeholder bureau	Scientists	Governments	Ad hoc	Primarily descriptive	Academic and traditional/ local knowledge of stakeholders
	Global Environment Outlook	Regular United Nations science publication with formal link	Formal	Governments, stakeholders	Scientists guided by United Nations	Peers	Regular	Descriptive and normative	Academic, peer-reviewed, United Nations
	Working Group on the Asian Highway	Intergovernmental United Nations expert group	Formal	Governments	United Nations staff guided by experts	United Nations	Regular	Descriptive	Governments, United Nations, academic, private sector

Type	*Examples*	*Description*	*Link to political process*	*Participants nominated/selected by*	*Drafted by*	*Text approved by*	*Frequency*	*Normative or descriptive*	*Type of knowledge assessed*
	Committee for Development Policy	Standing United Nations expert groups with formal reporting to governments	Formal	Secretary-General	United Nations staff guided by Committee members	Committee	Regular	Normative	Academic, peer-reviewed, United Nations
Scientific, technocratic assessments	High-level Panel on Global Sustainability	Ad hoc initiatives of the Secretary-General	Formal, limited	Secretary-General	United Nations staff guided by Panel	Panel	Ad hoc	Normative	United Nations, governments, academic, non-governmental organizations, stakeholders
	United Nations flagship publications: *Global Biodiversity Outlook*, *World Economic and Social Survey*, study on sustainable development in the twenty-first century	United Nations flagship publications, drawing on United Nations expert groups and linked to United Nations process	Formal, weak	United Nations	United Nations staff jointly with experts	United Nations	Ad hoc or regular	Descriptive and normative	Academic, non-governmental organizations, United Nations, government, stakeholders

Type	*Examples*	*Description*	*Link to political process*	*Participants nominated/selected by*	*Drafted by*	*Text approved by*	*Frequency*	*Normative or descriptive*	*Type of knowledge assessed*
Scientific research collaborations	Global Energy Assessment	Collaborative collation of scientific knowledge	Informal	Peers	Scientists	Authors, peers	Ad hoc	Descriptive and normative	Academic, peer-reviewed
	Millennium Ecosystem Assessment	Identification of scientific basis and knowledge gaps for action	Non-governmental	Selected by science panel, endorsed by board	Scientists	Peers	Ad hoc	Descriptive and normative	Academic, peer-reviewed, stakeholders
	Census of Marine Life; Future Earth Initiative	Collaborative scientific research programme	Non-governmental	Peers	Scientists	Authors, peers	Ad hoc	Descriptive	Academic, own research

26. Many countries and some regions have established processes to prepare sustainable development reports, many of which are supported by local scientific communities and feature local priorities. Hence, a bottom-up approach for the global report would benefit from such rich and diverse local policy-relevant knowledge.

27. Crowdsourcing proved a useful tool to identify new and emerging issues that scientists recommend decision makers consider for action. The issues identified differed significantly from issues highlighted in the ad hoc expert group meetings and from issues identified by young researchers. Hence, for a balanced result, the global report may want to allow for a wide range of participation through multiple channels and feature a wide range of perspectives. However, crowdsourcing has its limitations. Protocols for evaluating non-conventional sources of scientific knowledge might be needed.

28. The review of sustainable development progress provided evidence that impressive gains in some areas have come at the expense of worsening trends, in other areas, in recent decades. Integrated assessment is therefore needed to monitor the interlinkages between issues and themes.

29. Scientific assessments of progress can sometimes lead to rather different results compared to institutional assessments of progress against agreed goals or commitments. Both are important but different in nature. Hence, a traditional monitoring report focused on progress towards sustainable development goals might not by itself strengthen the science-policy interface.

30. Views differ across governments, civil society groups, academia and the public on the progress made, remaining gaps and ways forward towards sustainable development. Some of the differences arise from the adoption of different system boundaries and timescales, ranging from current, local actions all the way to the Earth's biota and a perspective of thousands of years. Interactions between system boundaries and timescales are non-trivial, and, in fact, policy recommendations derived from short-run and narrower approaches are often contradictory to those predicated on long-run, broader considerations.

31. A global scale and the time frame of the next two generations until 2050, together with intermediate milestones, has proven to be a reasonable choice for addressing, in an intergenerationally equitable way, many of the issues on the sustainable development agenda, such as eliminating poverty and hunger; enabling livelihoods; feeding, nurturing, housing and educating the world's population; securing peace, security and freedom; and preserving the Earth's life support systems.

32. Separate assessments and goals already exist for all the thematic areas currently on the agenda of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals. However, an integrated assessment is lacking that could identify alternative future pathways that resolve trade-offs and build synergies between policy actions. In this context, scenarios can be useful and help in reducing uncertainties over the required levels of investment and international cooperation for achieving the sustainable development goals. Hence, the report might promote in-depth cooperation on sustainable development scenarios.

33. Scientists and United Nations entities have promoted a long list of sectoral and aggregate indicators. They have been developed with different objectives and

organizational interests in mind. In particular, there has been no agreement on a comprehensive, aggregate indicator of sustainable development progress that might complement gross domestic product (GDP). Remote sensing and other big data approaches, beyond official statistics, show strong potential for assessing long-term sustainable development progress at various spatial and temporal scales, especially in the poorest parts of the world, where official data is scarce.

34. Selected science digests might be a useful way to involve scientists in highly specialized fields to engage in the broader science-policy interface in the context of the high-level political forum.

35. Case studies of the nexus between climate, land, energy, water and development illustrate the benefits of integrated approaches focusing on issue clusters rather than sectors or themes. They can help in identifying innovative and better solutions. As the "right" cluster of issues for integrated policy is case-specific, future editions of the report might analyse and identify other important issue clusters. Looking at these issues in an integrated way may support efforts for more integrated decision-making.

III. Response to the questionnaire on the scope and methodology for a global sustainable development report

36. Responses to the questionnaire on the scope and methodology for a global sustainable development report were received from China, Costa Rica, Croatia, the European Union, Indonesia, Japan, Jordan, the Russian Federation, Switzerland, Tunisia, and the United Kingdom, from the European Union and from the Committee for Development Policy, ECLAC, ESCAP, UNCTAD, UNEP and WMO.[7] In addition, related inputs were considered from experts and United Nations partners who participated in expert group meetings that were convened in support of the report in 2013,[8] including written responses from the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and from ECE, FAO, IAEA, UNEP and UNESCO.

A. Overall direction

37. In their responses to the questionnaire, a number of Member States and United Nations entities provided guidance on the overall direction for the report.

Added value

38. Member States emphasized the need for the report to be complementary to and to add value to existing processes and United Nations reports. In particular, a synthesis report is expected to add value and provide improved access to the

[7] The questionnaire and the full text of the responses are available online at http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/globalsdreport/.

[8] Inter alia, the expert group meeting for a global sustainable development report — engaging national assessments (Beijing, 12 and 13 December 2013) and the expert group meeting on sustainable development assessments (New York, 3 and 4 September 2013), more information available from http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/globalsdreport.

findings of a large number of existing assessments and to highlight synergies and trade-offs between actions taken in various settings.

39. As an integrated assessment of assessments, the report is expected to become a useful instrument for the high-level political forum, especially in agenda-se' ing and in the context of the sustainable development goals and/or post-2015 development framework. The preparation process for the report is expected to foster collaboration among analytical teams in the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions.

Focus and integration

40. Member States suggested focusing on the implementation of sustainable development and specifically the sustainable development goals and/or post-2015 development agenda, providing lessons learned and identifying good practices and challenges.

41. The emphasis should be on interlinkages between issues and on tools to address them in an intergenerationally equitable way. This might include, in particular, a cross-sectoral analysis of progress made, obstacles encountered and potential integrated policy options.

Capacity needs

42. The availability of data and analysis capacity of high quality remains an issue, especially in developing countries, and lessons are available from existing assessments in this regard. Member States envisaged a consultative, participatory process that would require building data and analysis capacity for integrated assessments and future scenarios. A joint United Nations effort would be needed to address and monitor the availability and quality of data and analytical methodologies.

Role of the report in the high-level political forum and post-2015 development agenda

43. In line with the General Assembly resolution 66/288, Member States envisaged that the report would bring together the findings of scientific assessments as input for the policy deliberations at the high-level political forum. The report might have an important monitoring and accountability function and should be policy-relevant, but not make specific policy recommendations. Some Member States also envisaged the report becoming one of a number of contributions to supporting implementation of the future sustainable development goals and post-2015 development agenda.

Audience

44. The audience would comprise policymakers, notably at the highest level, senior government officials, the United Nations system and a wide range of stakeholders.

B. Scope

Preferred scope in terms of issue focus

45. Many respondents suggested capturing the priority issues identified in the Rio process, including Agenda 21 and the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, as well as in other important internationally agreed goals and commitments.

46. Most respondents had a clear preference for a science-based, yet practical report that identifies policy solutions and supports the deliberations of the high-level political forum, as well as the implementation of future sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda. The report would focus on identifying opportunities and challenges/obstacles to progress in sustainable development, and acknowledge the different priorities and capabilities of countries. Many respondents expected a focus on global issues to be considered by the forum, including new and emerging issues, whereas others suggested highlighting national and regional priorities.

47. One Member State suggested four sections for the report: landscape, review of progress, opportunities and challenges, and policy recommendations. The analytical focus should be on the interaction among economic, social and environmental dimensions, on key drivers of change, and on clusters of closely interlinked issues (e.g., the nexus between food, water and energy). Most would like the report to present good practices of integrated policies and some would also like to see in-depth sectoral analyses.

48. Many respondents expected an empirical analysis of progress on the means of implementation. In particular, the report could present good practices in leveraging financing, technology, trade, capacity-building, international cooperation and multi-stakeholder partnerships. Some suggested reviewing existing mechanisms in support of sustainability and highlighting their advances or failures at different levels and timescales, including an analysis of the efficiency, effectiveness and financial and technical contributions of the institutional framework to support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development goals.

49. In addition, a number of specific issues were suggested for inclusion: poverty eradication; inclusive growth; the sustainable management of natural resources (water, energy, biodiversity, land use and soil protection); sustainable consumption and production patterns; terrestrial and marine ecosystems management; climate change; sustainable development goals; international technical and financial cooperation; technology transfer; health; the nexus between resilience, adaptation, sustainability and development; decision-making tools; and enhancing preparedness and building resilience.

Geographic scope

50. Most respondents agreed that the report should have both a global and a regional geographic scope, that it should be based on national reporting and make use of the regional commissions, at the regional level, and take into account the differences between developed and developing countries. Most respondents suggested the Department of Economic and Social Affairs continue coordinating the

global scope and the regional commissions assist with regional sections of the report.

51. Many suggested including analysis for country groups, for example, countries in special situations or with high vulnerability (e.g., small island developing States, the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, countries in sub-Saharan Africa) and/or for country groups categorized by development stage (e.g., developing countries, developed countries, economies in transition) or by income (e.g., high-, middle- and low-income countries).

52. In view of the fact that global issues need to be addressed nationally and locally, many also suggested reporting on trends and experiences at the national and local levels, based on countries' own national sustainable development reports.

Time horizon

53. Most respondents recommended the report adopt a long-term, transformative vision, while using a pragmatic, flexible approach to match the different timescales of sustainable development issues. Some defined long term as a time horizon of 20 to 30 or 50 years. In particular, it was suggested that the report cover milestones in or around 1992, to the present day, 2030 and 2050, in order to reflect progress since Agenda 21, the current situation and future orientation. Other respondents suggested adopting the time horizon of the future sustainable development goals. A particular focus, for a given report, might be on the period of 4 to 5 years preceding the preparation of that report.

54. Interlinked sustainable development issues operate at widely different, but interacting, geographic and timescales.

Scope of scientific knowledge

55. Respondents suggested establishing a scientific, coherent and robust assessment framework. The report might comprise an easily readable executive summary and a detailed scientific analysis covering all dimensions of sustainable development.

56. One group of respondents suggested including different types of knowledge, ranging from peer-reviewed literature and existing international assessments to local and multi-stakeholder knowledge, reflecting the perspectives of scientific communities and users of scientific research around the world. Another group of respondents recommended an exclusive focus on peer-reviewed scientific information and research.

Key national, regional and global priority issues to be reflected in the report

57. Global priority issues to be reflected in the report should be linked to global challenges, such as those highlighted in Agenda 21, General Assembly resolution 66/288 and in the future sustainable development goals and post-2015 development agenda. The report would focus on policy coherence, integrated policy, interlinkages and implementation challenges at all levels.

58. Regional priority issues should be defined by each of the regions and national priority issues identified in national development strategies. Member States could

each highlight the most important tasks, from their national perspective, which could then be reflected in the report.

59. Respondents generally supported a focus on the global aspiration for the next two generations to eliminate poverty and hunger; to feed, nurture, house and educate 9 billion people by 2050; to secure inclusive growth, equity and development; and to preserve the Earth's life support systems. In particular, respondents specifically referred to the following priority issues: poverty and hunger eradication; wealth creation; agriculture, food security and nutrition; sustainable consumption and production; resource intensity; employment and decent work; jobless growth; inclusive growth and income distribution; social equity and security; education and learning; health and sanitation; population; financing; official development assistance; international debt management; trade; a green economy; science and technology innovation; access to and transfer of technologies; urbanization; energy; water; climate change; land use and soil protection; forests; oceans and seas; marine protection and fishing; ocean acidification; biodiversity and ecosystems; housing; sustainable tourism; waste management; infrastructure development; transport; universal access to safe water, sanitation, sustainable energy, quality education and health-care services; equality; social protection; resilience to the impact of climate change; disaster risk reduction; resilient buildings and communities; urbanization; slums; land use; land degradation; desertification, drought and deforestation; the nexus between environment, poverty and inequality; resource management; mining; macroeconomics; pricing; barriers and disincentives to sustainable industrialization; intergenerational equity and welfare systems; governance and institutions; ecological-civilization society; and peace and security.

Role of the report in identifying new and emerging issues

60. All respondents saw a role for the report in identifying and addressing new and emerging issues, through sound scientific evidence, assessments and forward-looking projections, taking into account ongoing discussions in other relevant United Nations forums. Some even believed this role to be imperative. Others emphasized the need for political independence and objectivity of the report and believe that it should not be considered the only source for such analysis. Even those that wanted the report to focus primarily on implementation believe that it would most probably need to raise new and emerging issues in the process of identifying barriers to progress.

61. In this context, respondents noted a range of unexpected changes and shocks that typically lead to new and emerging issues. Examples include economic and financial crises, natural disasters and social and political instability.

62. Many respondents suggested identifying new and emerging issues through a combination of analysis of existing assessments and peer-reviewed literature; expert surveys; multi-stakeholder inputs from scientific communities, government officials, decision makers and civil society (e.g., using crowdsourcing and local knowledge); analysis of international agreements, commitments and meeting outcomes; and country-level consultations.

63. At the same time, several respondents emphasized that the identification of new and emerging issues has to be based on sound scientific evidence. Others suggested a process whereby each country would identify its emerging priority

issues, based on evidence, followed by agreement within the high-level political forum on a list of emerging issues for the purpose of agenda-setting.

Type of content

64. Most respondents suggested capturing past and future trends, policy lessons and scientific findings indicating potential areas for policy action, in order to enable evidence-based decision-making within the high-level political forum. A particular focus might be determined for each edition of the report.

65. The report should provide policy-relevant advice, not policy recommendations as such. It should indicate how interlinkages can be addressed and what the leverage points and gaps are for the implementation of the sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda.

66. It might showcase good practices and innovative policies, plans, programmes, initiatives and technologies concerning sustainable development from around the world, and identify the criteria and conditions that enable success in such endeavours. Some suggest emphasizing both successful and unsuccessful national cases and capturing the institutional and political dimensions.

67. The report is expected to feature scientific findings indicating potential areas for policy action. In this regard, it should take into account the work of independent scientific advisory groups and cooperate with assessment initiatives.

Monitoring and accountability framework for the sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda

68. Most respondents envisaged the report being part of or contributing to the monitoring and accountability framework for the future sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda. They also expected the report to engage a broad range of stakeholders. However, several respondents who favoured this approach think that a decision in this regard would be premature, as the post-2015 framework will not be decided before 2015.

69. One Member State outlined potential elements of a larger monitoring and accountability framework for the post -2015 development agenda:

(a) National reporting by countries and national stakeholders. A synthesis of lessons learned based on national reviews of sustainable development commitments could inform the global sustainable development report submitted to the meeting of the high-level political forum convened under the auspices of the General Assembly, every four years;

(b) Monitoring of targets and indicators of the sustainable development goals and/or post-2015 development agenda at the international level, which would likely be the role of an enlarged inter-agency report coordinated by the United Nations Development Group, as successor to reporting on the Millennium Development Goals;

(c) Sectorial in-depth reporting, as carried out by specialized agencies and others, such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, ILO, UNEP and the Global Environment Outlook, the World Health Organization (WHO), and others;

(d) Analysis of interlinkages, data availability, the science-policy interface and other aspects which could be the primary role of the global sustainable development report.

70. Another respondent suggested having a separate accompanying report on monitoring and accountability, which would be summarized in the main report.

71. Several respondents emphasized the intergovernmental nature of the processes, driven by Member States, under the auspices of the General Assembly leading up to the sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda. Against this background, they suggested that the report might be used by such processes, but that it would not be part of a monitoring framework. Instead, the report's primary function would be to support the deliberations of the high-level political forum, which provides political leadership and facilitates sustainable development implementation at the global level.

Periodicity of the report

72. Respondents differed in terms of preferred periodicity of the report, ranging from a report every year to one every 5 years. However, those that favoured a multi-year cycle, with an in-depth report to be prepared every 4 or 5 years, suggest intermediate and/or focused reports every year (or every 2 years), in order to support all meetings of the high-level political forum.

73. Most respondents suggested an in-depth report be produced every 4 years, to coincide with the convening of the forum under the auspices of the General Assembly. The periodicity must be based on the needs of the forum and the post-2015 development agenda and take into account national reporting capacities. In particular, respondents suggested additional reports could be drafted in response to unpredictable circumstances that have a major impact on work relating to sustainable development.

74. Those who would like to see monitoring and accountability included in the role of the report suggested more frequent updates on quantitative indicators, once or twice each year.

75. Some suggested adjusting the periodicity of reports and assessments that would contribute to the main report, such as the Global Environment Outlook report, which is currently produced every 5 years.

C. Methodology

Preparation of the global report

76. Most respondents expected an important role for the United Nations system in the preparation of the report. They suggested a joint United Nations system effort (including the Bretton Woods organizations), coordinated by the Division for Sustainable Development in its role as secretariat for the high-level political forum. In particular, some respondents suggested the chief scientists (or equivalent) of relevant United Nations entities should collaborate in the preparation process (for example, those of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, of FAO, ILO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNESCO, UNEP, UNIDO and WHO and of the secretariats of the Rio Conventions). The regional commissions should coordinate consultative meetings to prepare regional reports as input for the

global report. Some welcomed the preparation of the prototype edition as a good general direction for future editions of the report.

77. Many suggested that national focal points be part of the process, in one form or another, and emphasized the need for technical support from the United Nations for developing countries. Some suggested encouraging the preparation of national sustainable development reports for synthesis at the regional and global levels, whereas others preferred the report to be drafted by scientists chosen by Member States or the Secretariat.

78. The report would build on existing reports and assessments, such as those mentioned in the prototype edition of the report, including national sustainable development reports, United Nations publications and international assessments. Many respondents suggested a multi-stakeholder process engaging scientists, experts, governments and civil society in undertaking analysis and assessments, possibly through joint working groups.

79. Transparency and fairness of the process was seen as essential, including in terms of selection of the experts. The report should undergo a peer review process by scientists, policymakers and other relevant stakeholders. Data collection should be made through platforms spanning the global, regional, national and local levels and engage international scientific platforms.

Choosing the thematic focus of a given edition of the report

80. Many respondents suggested the thematic focus of a given edition of the report be related to or coincide with the theme of the relevant meeting of the high-level political forum. While some respondents suggested the forum should choose the thematic focus, others preferred a multi-stakeholder process, within the forum, which would include Member States, relevant United Nations entities, civil society and regional consultations. Another suggestion is for the Secretariat to carry out a multi-stakeholder survey, the results of which would be considered and prioritized by Member States.

Principles

81. Respondents suggested the report should follow the spirit of the Rio Principles and of other internationally agreed principles. They further suggested using the same principles and methods which are being used for the preparation of other United Nations reports, including the objectivity and political independence of conclusions, as well as a balanced reflection of country- and region-specific information and data.

82. In particular, respondents recommended the following guiding principles for the report: universality; legitimacy; representativeness; common but differentiated responsibilities; uniformity; comparability; objectivity; accuracy; transparency; inclusivity; balance; accountability; clarity; accessibility; leadership by example; continuous improvement; and the right of each country to decide on their own development pathways. They emphasized the need for adequate funding and suggest an integrated, scientific approach, timely information and multi-stakeholder perspectives. Research presented should be replicable and verifiable; hypotheses must be tested; and analytical work should be peer-reviewed. Member States

expressed a clear preference for a policy-relevant, but not policy-prescriptive, report that is aligned with public policy needs.

83. Legitimacy of the report at the global level would require that the scientific organizations or the scientific advisory mechanisms involved are representative of the scientific community worldwide; preferably already have some track record of providing scientific advice to policymaking bodies; and that the functioning of the organization and/or the process is fully transparent. Making participation in science-policy processes open, inclusive and geographically balanced was seen as indispensable for ensuring a politically legitimate product.

Scientific methods

84. Many respondents agreed that the prototype edition that was presented at the first meeting of the high-level political forum, in September 2013, provided a useful basis on the methodological side for future editions. They suggested adopting a multidisciplinary, integrated approach in the spirit of sustainability science and drawing on a multitude of sources and data. Respondents also suggested learning from existing international assessments and allowing scientists and Member States the flexibility to choose the relevant methods on a case-by-case basis.

85. Respondents specifically recommended considering the following elements: the reporting of both scientific and official data, in order to create greater buy-in from stakeholders, experts and government representatives; statistical analysis and evaluation of past and future trends; global sustainable development scenario models to analyse trade-offs across policy objectives; inductive and empirical methods, using quantitative and qualitative data; sustainable development indicators; backcasting; a likelihood approach and capturing uncertainties.

Organization of input from national and regional contributions

86. As regards the best way to organize national and regional contributions, respondents fell into two groups, with different views. However, both groups agreed that the process would combine research, analysis and consultations.

87. One group emphasized the need to make use of existing structures, avoiding the creation of new focal points and preparatory processes. In their view, the existing networks and focal points could facilitate discussions and consultations at all levels and would allow for external expert participation.

88. The other group would like to see the establishment of a targeted network of national and regional focal points and/or experts, who would be nominated by governments. Regular consultations with the focal points would ensure the consideration of stakeholder inputs from around the world. The focal points would gather data, review progress and conduct focus group discussions. Some would like to see a model similar to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, in which the nominated experts would meet regularly and draft the report.

89. Many respondents in the second group suggested countries and regions should develop their own national and regional sustainable development reports, on a voluntary basis, as input for the global report. In this model, the United Nations system would provide capacity-building and technical support. The regional commissions would organize regional consultations. Existing national sustainable

development councils or similar committees in charge of the implementation of sustainable development would play an important role.

90. Some also suggested organizing a participatory process to define a template and web-based toolkit for national reporting, for consideration by Member States and supported by United Nations capacity-building efforts.

Proposed concrete steps to involve scientists from a wide range of countries and regions

91. Respondents suggested a number of concrete actions. For example, the Secretariat might want to request countries to nominate candidates to the writing team for the report, which would ensure consideration of the views of scientific communities, practitioners and policymakers. Others suggested using existing mechanisms of government consultation with civil society in order to seek policy advice and to create scientific forums around specific policy questions in support of the report.

92. Several respondents also suggested various institutions, communities or networks to be mobilized for the report, such as the existing networks of national academies of science; networks of scientific institutions; scientists among United Nations staff; the Scientific Advisory Board of the Secretary-General; United Nations system networks and communities; the Future Earth Initiative; the Indonesian Institute of Sciences; the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission; the Sustainable Development Solutions Network; and statistical offices.

93. Several respondents suggested involving all sectors and major groups identified in Agenda 21, including the United Nations system; planning agencies; prominent universities, research institutes and think tanks; professional societies; scientific associations; civil society and opinion makers; experts and scientists from national academia and line ministries; independent scientists; civil society networks; knowledge exchange platforms, and research and development institutions in the private and public domains.

Scientific advisory group or working group

94. While respondents agreed on the usefulness of some kind of scientific advisory group, or working group, to provide overall guidance, they expressed different views on the composition and expected role of the group.

95. Some believed that the existing networks of national academies of sciences would best serve the role of an advisory group and also be the appropriate mechanism to peer review the report. Others would prefer the group of chief scientists of relevant United Nations entities to play an important role and envisage a scientific advisory board under the auspices of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, FAO, ILO, UNDP, UNESCO, UNEP, UNIDO, WHO and the secretariats of the Rio Conventions, that would be closely related to the high-level political forum. Some respondents emphasized the need for a mix of representatives from governments, the United Nations system and representatives of civil society and academic institutions. Still others would like to see an involvement of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Secretary-General.

96. Another group of respondents would like to see stronger ownership by Member States. They encouraged the Secretariat to consider establishing a working group of experts nominated by governments. In particular, they suggested following the practice of the Open Working Group on the Sustainable Development Goals, in order to take fully into account geographical balance and representation. The United Nations system and other international organizations could provide inputs to the draft and the working group of experts would arrange meetings to interact with stakeholders on a regular basis.

97. In another variant of the approach with national focal points, driven by Member States, each country would establish a national scientific advisory committee that could be involved in national and global reports, for which the United Nations would provide technical assistance.

National sustainable development report processes

98. Many respondents would like to see voluntary national sustainable development report processes and national experiences featured in the report. However, there is a link to future decisions of the high-level political forum, including on regular reviews on the follow-up and implementation of commitments and objectives and the registry of voluntary commitments.

99. There are different options available, which have to reconcile the needs for flexibility, streamlined reporting and national consultations. Respondents suggested the national reports become building blocks of an international reporting system. An advisory group might guide the preparation of the national reports, which would address the sustainable development goals and/or the post-2015 development agenda and all areas of the national sustainable development strategy. Developing countries should receive capacity-building support. National processes might include interministerial dialogues.

How should the report inform the work of the high-level political forum?

100. Many respondents suggested the report be integrated into and provide scientific evidence to the deliberations of the high-level political forum, in order to enhance the science-policy interface for sustainable development. They would like to see the forum consider the method of integration and to decide what role and follow-up it would see for future reports.

101. The report should play a role in providing the forum with scientific knowledge in an easily comprehensible way. It could be utilized by the forum as a source of scientific analysis for setting its agenda, but it would not be the only agenda-setting input.

102. Many respondents expected the report to provide scientific analysis of issues on the agenda of the forum, provide evidence in support of the forum's decision-making and follow-up analysis, disseminate forum activities, channel feedback from the international community, and carry out scientific monitoring of the future set of post-2015 development goals.

IV. Recommendations

103. **As outlined above, Member States, the United Nations system and many scientists already agree on many of the elements that define the scope and methodology for a global sustainable development report. The elements are summarized in table 2 and could be considered as part of the way forward.**

Table 2
Common elements of agreement on the scope and methodology for the report

Element	*Agreement*
Added value	Easy access for decision makers to findings of many scientific assessments. Highlight synergies and trade-offs between policy actions in various settings
Focus	Focus on implementation, obstacles to progress, good practices of integrated policy
Capacity needs	Joint United Nations effort to support the participation of developing countries
Audience	Policymakers, senior government officials and wide range of stakeholders
Scope in terms of issue focus	Priority issues identified in the Rio process, including Agenda 21, General Assembly resolution 66/288 and other internationally agreed goals and commitments. Supports the high-level political forum and implementation of future sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda
Geographic scope	Global and five United Nations regions, with analysis for groups of countries in special situations
Time horizon	Medium- (10 years) to long-term (20 to 50 years)
New and emerging issues	Identification of issues based on sound scientific evidence
Coordination of report process	United Nations task team coordinated by the secretariat of the high-level political forum (Division for Sustainable Development) at the global level and by the regional commissions at the regional level
Type of content	Past and future trends; lessons learned; scientific findings indicating potential areas for policy action; opportunities and challenges for implementation
Periodicity	In-depth report every four years coinciding with meetings of the high-level political forum convened under the auspices of the General Assembly, and focused report contribution for the meetings of the forum under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council
Normative or descriptive	Policy-relevant content and options, but no normative policy recommendations

Element	*Agreement*
Monitoring and accountability framework for sustainable development goals/post-2015 development agenda	The report could possibly become one of several contributions to the framework. Details are to be decided after 2015
Scientific methods	Multidisciplinary, integrated approach in the spirit of sustainability science. Precise methods to be decided by scientists, but prototype report illustrates a useful basis regarding the methodology for future editions
How to inform the work of the high-level political forum	The report could become one of several inputs to be integrated into and provide scientific evidence for the deliberations of the high-level political forum

104. **Taking into account the different views on a number of elements, the following options could be considered (see table 3):**

(a) **Option 1: conventional United Nations model for flagship publications;**

(b) **Option 2: multi-stakeholder model linked to voluntary national processes;**

(c) **Option 3: intergovernmental panel on sustainable development.**

105. **Option 1 would follow the conventional approach for United Nations flagship publications. The report would be drafted by United Nations staff, who would also select experts for ad hoc contributions. Knowledge inputs comprise peer-reviewed literature and United Nations system expertise. The report would be peer-reviewed internally and approved by senior management of the United Nations. Inputs from Member States and stakeholders would be based on ad hoc requests and based entirely on existing United Nations structures, including those of the regional commissions. Advantages of option 1 include its low cost (it could be implemented within existing resources), quick turnaround times, new structures or working methods would not be needed, and the representation of a wide range of perspectives would be included. Disadvantages include limited consultations, weak linkages to existing assessments and initiatives and a potential for overlapping activities.**

106. **Option 2 would go further in terms of involving stakeholders and linking to voluntary national reviews. The report would be drafted by a team of United Nations staff comprising all members of the expanded Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs, with contributions from scientists, government officials and stakeholders. The report would undergo an external, multi-stakeholder peer-review process and be approved by senior management of the United Nations and/or a multi-stakeholder advisory group. Advice would be provided by representatives of academia, major groups, the United Nations system and other international organizations. This might include the chairs of major international assessment initiatives (e.g., the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity**

and Ecosystem Services), research programmes (e.g., the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, the Future Earth Initiative), and academies of sciences (e.g., the World Academy of Sciences for the advancement of science in developing countries, prominent national academies); representatives of major groups (ICSU, the International Social Science Council and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development); and young scientists; chairs of key United Nations groups (e.g., the Committee for Development Policy, the London Group on Environmental Accounting, the Scientific Advisory Board, Sustainable Energy for All, the Global Environment Outlook board); representatives of key United Nations reports and outlooks (regional commissions, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNESCO, UNEP, the secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity and of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund); and representatives of relevant non-United Nations organizations (the South Centre, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, regional development banks, the European Commission). Regional commissions would be encouraged to hold regional consultations and prepare contributions to the report. Existing national processes and/or voluntary national reviews in the context of the high-level political forum would become important partners. Most activities under option 2 could be implemented within existing resources with in-kind contributions, but additional resources might be needed for the participation of experts and capacity support to ensure effective participation of developing countries. Advantages include greater legitimacy, moderate cost and strong links between international assessments, national reviews and policymaking. Disadvantages include longer turnaround times due to extensive consultations and limited acceptance by certain scientific communities.

107. Option 3 follows an model similar to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, in which Member States would nominate scientific experts to a writing team, which would draft the report, to be adopted by Member States. Cooperation agreements might be sought with the bureaus of existing assessment initiatives. Lessons learned from reviews of the Intergovernmental Panel could be taken into account in the design of a panel. In particular, there might be a need to compensate authors for their contributions, in order to avoid conflicts of interest. Advantages of option 3 include a larger mobilization of scientific communities and of resources, and an institutionalized science-policy interface. Disadvantages include a higher cost (similar to those of other intergovernmental panels), inertia in the process as a result of the very large number of scientists involved, as well as the fact that the consensus model based on peer-reviewed literature, followed by the Intergovernmental Panel, would not necessarily encourage the presentation of emerging issues or diverse views.

Table 3
Overview of differences between the three options

Element	*Option 1: conventional United Nations model for flagship publications*	*Option 2: multi-stakeholder model linked to voluntary national processes*	*Option 3: intergovernmental panel on sustainable development*
Report drafted by	United Nations staff	Team of United Nations staff with contributions from scientists, government officials and stakeholders	Scientists nominated by Member States
Experts selected by	United Nations staff	United Nations staff, assessment initiatives, member States, major groups	Member States
Peer review by	Internal to United Nations system	External, multi-stakeholder peer review (open process) including the United Nations system	Peer review by participating scientists and external academic reviewers
Report approved by	Senior management of the United Nations	Senior management of the United Nations and/or multi-stakeholder advisory group	Member States
Scope of scientific knowledge	Peer-reviewed literature and United Nations system knowledge	All kinds of knowledge	Peer-reviewed literature
Regional priority issues identified by	Regional consultations coordinated by regional commissions	Multi-stakeholder regional consultations coordinated by regional commissions	Scientists
National priority issues identified by	Responses by Member States to United Nations questionnaires	Voluntary, national consultations coordinated by Member States and supported by United Nations capacity-building	Scientists
How to organize national and regional contributions	Desk study conducted by United Nations staff and inputs through ad hoc requests by the United Nations for inputs. Based on existing structures	Based on existing structures, using existing focal points or channels for nominations. Organized by interested Member States with capacity support from the United Nations system	New, formal group of scientists nominated by Member States
Choosing thematic focus of each edition	Senior management of the United Nations	High-level political forum, in consultation with scientists and stakeholders	High-level political forum
National sustainable development process	No direct link	Partly based on voluntary processes and reports	No direct link

Element	*Option 1: conventional United Nations model for flagship publications*	*Option 2: multi-stakeholder model linked to voluntary national processes*	*Option 3: intergovernmental panel on sustainable development*
Scientific advisory group or working group	Internal to the United Nations with ad hoc external contributions	Multi-stakeholder group, including representatives of academies of sciences, the Scientific Advisory Board, the Committee for Development Policy, and of key international assessments	New group of scientists nominated by governments

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Letter dated 19 June 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the report on the high-level symposium of the Development Cooperation Forum held in Montreux, Switzerland, on 24 and 25 October 2013 on the theme "Development cooperation in a post-2015 era: sustainable development for all" (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Economic and Social Council, under agenda item 5 (b).

(*Signed*) Paul **Seger**
Permanent Representative

* E/2014/1/Rev.1, annex II.

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Annex to the letter dated 19 June 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council

Report on the high-level symposium of the Development Cooperation Forum held in Montreux, Switzerland, on 24 and 25 October 2013 on the theme "Development cooperation in a post-2015 era: sustainable development for all"

I. Introduction

1. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, in collaboration with the Government of Switzerland, organized a high-level symposium in Montreux in preparation for the fourth high-level meeting of the Development Cooperation Forum, which will be held in New York on 10 and 11 July 2014. The symposium focused on the implications for development cooperation of an agenda that brings together poverty eradication and sustainable development and applies to all countries. The meeting provided the first major opportunity for a multi-stakeholder discussion, following on from the special event of the President of the General Assembly in September 2013, at which Member States called for a unified and universal post-2015 development agenda.

2. The symposium brought together more than 150 high-level participants from a broad range of stakeholders and from the developmental and environmental realms. It included several informal meetings before the main event and side events, including for civil society stakeholders, parliamentarians and Swiss actors in development cooperation. A meeting of partners in South-South cooperation was held alongside the symposium to further the work of the core group of Southern partners. The symposium also included a meeting of the Advisory Group of the Development Cooperation Forum to discuss the preparations for the Forum in 2014.

3. The symposium built on key messages on a renewed global partnership for development for the post-2015 era generated by the high-level symposium of the Development Cooperation Forum, held in Addis Ababa from 5 to 7 June 2013, and a side event held during the substantive session of 2013 of the Economic and Social Council.[a] Its outcomes will feed directly into the Development Cooperation Forum in 2014 and the continuing work on a post-2015 global development agenda. It also set the stage for the high-level symposium on the accountability and effectiveness of development cooperation in the post-2015 era, to be held in Berlin on 20 and 21 March 2014, with informal meetings before the main event on 19 March.

4. The present report provides a summary of the key messages of the symposium in section II and a more detailed summary in section III on the changing context for development cooperation; the need for a renewed global partnership for

[a] In addition to the background materials prepared by the Department for Economic and Social Affairs, three analytical studies provided a basis for discussion: "Cooperation for sustainable development: critical challenges for development cooperation in a post-2015 world", by Andrew Rogerson and Jonathan Glennie, Overseas Development Institute, London; "Public aid as a driver for private investment", by Iliana Olivié and Aitor Pérez, Elcano Royal Institute, Madrid; and "The post-2015 sustainable development agenda: implications for development cooperation", by Kate Higgins and Shannon Kinderay, North-South Institute, Ottawa.

development; the role of development cooperation in implementing a post-2015 development agenda, with particular emphasis on resources for development; and monitoring and accountability as a powerful tool to advance the implementation of a post-2015 development agenda.

II. Key messages

5. The traditional North-South framework for pursuing global development cooperation is losing its importance. Sustainability has moved out of its environmental confines and is set to become the centrepiece of a post-2015 development agenda. A new narrative of international development cooperation that matches the changed development landscape is urgently needed.

6. A transformative agenda must be matched by a different scale and scope of support. A renewed global partnership for development is needed that brings together the Monterrey track on financing for development and the Rio track on financing for sustainable development and means of implementation, taking the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development as a starting point.

7. Development cooperation should benefit all stakeholders, especially the poor and most vulnerable, within and among countries. Least developed countries and middle-income countries will need continued support, although of different kinds. International support is needed to tackle both any unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals and new challenges of global concern.

8. Working towards the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income dedicated to official development assistance remains critical. Even if past official development assistance commitments were met, however, those resources alone would still fall far short of what will be needed to support the implementation of the global development agenda.

9. Development cooperation today is about more than the relations between Governments, both North-South and South-South, and about much more than aid. Development cooperation is about enabling and supporting, rather than driving. It is about engaging development actors in a range of customized partnerships.

10. The type, or form, of development cooperation should follow its evolving function. The support should be flexible and take into consideration country needs and specific priorities. Providing incentives for the diverse set of actors, including the private sector, will be critical to the implementation of the agenda.

11. A shared, yet differentiated, framework for multiple accountability for development cooperation commitments will be needed to ensure sustainable development results. Such a framework should put greater focus on "how" to promote inclusive development and to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of development cooperation.

12. Governments alone cannot deliver the transformation that is needed. Broad multi-stakeholder engagement will be necessary, in a renewed and dynamic global partnership for development, based on co-creation and genuine exchange.

13. Multi-stakeholder partnerships are unlikely to replace intergovernmental partnerships. They are, however, likely to become an ever more important

complement. Global multi-stakeholder partnerships, including the recent initiatives of the Secretary-General, show their great potential in engaging a broad set of actors.

14. The candid discussions in Montreux showed an openness among stakeholders to questioning some of the fundamentals of development cooperation. This suggests that space is opening up for a post-2015 financing framework that matches the ambition of a transformative, unified and universal development agenda.

III. Detailed summary

A. Changing context of development cooperation

Acknowledge the need for a new narrative

15. **Ensure that all understand and appreciate the importance of the changes taking place**. We must recognize the scope, scale and impact of the changes over the past 10 to 15 years. We must acknowledge that, moving forward, marginal adjustments will not be sufficient.

16. **Go beyond the notion of solidarity and include an agenda of common interests**. Solidarity remains an important driver of country engagement in development cooperation. In an increasingly globalized and interdependent world, an agenda of common concerns and interests is also emerging. Self-interest is now often closely associated with advancing such an agenda of common interest. Collective interests should, therefore, be seen as an integral part of self-interest.

Review the scope of development cooperation in the post-2015 era

17. **Recognize that development cooperation needs to adjust to new development challenges, in addition to tackling any unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals**. Development cooperation will need to find ways to address new challenges, such as the change in the geography of poverty, the rise in inequality, high levels of unemployment, rapid globalization and the increased need for collective approaches to global challenges.

18. **Recognize that putting sustainable development at the core of a post-2015 development agenda requires a refocusing of development efforts**. Eradicating poverty, in all its dimensions, will remain the highest priority of a post-2015 development agenda. At the same time, putting sustainable development at the core of a post-2015 development agenda implies a much broader scope beyond traditional development cooperation.

Examine the role of development cooperation beyond 2015

19. **Acknowledge the important role of development cooperation in advancing the implementation of a post-2015 development agenda**. Development cooperation can help to devise collective responses to sustainable development challenges. It can serve as an integrating force by bringing different actors and different approaches together through multi-stakeholder partnerships under the global partnership for development.

20. **Recognize that the role of development cooperation varies for different groups of countries**. For countries that depend on aid, in particular least developed

countries and countries emerging from conflict, development cooperation will continue to play an important role, in terms of both closing financing gaps and providing incentives for specific actions to promote development progress. For countries that are not dependent on aid, in particular the advanced and large middle-income countries, development cooperation plays a primarily catalytic role and helps to provide incentives for specific actions to accelerate development progress.

Find effective ways of engaging the increasingly diverse group of development actors

21. **Development cooperation today is much more than a relationship between Governments and more than aid**. While still home to most of the world's poor, emerging economies and middle-income countries are playing an active role in development cooperation. Civil society is playing an increasingly important role, both as an advocate and as a development actor on the ground. Private philanthropic foundations and private sector actors have also become increasingly involved. The ability to engage development actors, in a range of customized partnerships based on genuine exchange, will be a key determining factor for the successful implementation of the post-2015 development agenda.

Explore new ways of delivering development cooperation

22. **Ensure that development cooperation adopts a long-term focus and addresses structural factors that enable sustainable development**. Rather than seeking to achieve quick wins, the renewed emphasis on sustainable development makes it even more imperative to focus on tackling systemic barriers and addressing the structural drivers of development progress.

23. **Strengthen country ownership, building on lessons learned**. Development cooperation must be locally owned and driven, supporting tailor-made approaches. National development strategies must be respected. Careful programming and a participatory approach can help to ensure a link between larger national projects and the regional, national and local levels. Good governance, both in partner and programme countries, is critical.

24. **Recognize that there are no one-size-fits-all solutions**. Development cooperation must be sufficiently flexible to allow individual solutions to individual challenges. While a post-2015 development agenda should encompass goals and targets at the global level, the global partnership for development must also reflect national priorities, needs and circumstances. It should thus promote ownership and aim to strengthen the national capacities of developing countries and local organizations and authorities.

Ensure that intergovernmental discussions on a post-2015 development agenda catch up with the changed realities on the ground

25. **The post-2015 development agenda needs to reflect the new reality of a changed development landscape**. The consultations should ensure that the voices of the various stakeholders from the ground are being heard. To support the implementation of a post-2015 development agenda effectively, the United Nations itself will also need to adapt, in terms of both its operational activities and the functioning of the United Nations system, at the global level.

B. Renewed global partnership for development in the post-2015 era

Move towards one unified financing framework, taking Monterrey as a starting point

26. **Go beyond the Monterrey Consensus**. A renewed global partnership should build on the experience of the Millennium Development Goals. A renewed global partnership needs to match the level of ambition of a transformative post-2015 development agenda. It should take the Monterrey Consensus as a starting point but go beyond it, in terms of both the integration of the diverse group of actors and the sources and modalities that it uses.

27. **Transition towards one unified financing framework**. The post-2015 development agenda should be supported by a single, unified and comprehensive financing framework. That implies bringing the Monterrey and Rio tracks together, in a comprehensive renewed global partnership for development. A unified financing framework should ensure a coherent, holistic and forward-looking approach in addressing poverty eradication and the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.

Move towards a global partnership, where partners can engage on an equal footing

28. **Move away from a passive relationship between donors and recipients**. The renewed global partnership should be open, transparent and truly inclusive, enabling the diverse group of stakeholders to engage on a more equal footing. It should enable diverse actors to bring their various strengths to bear. The contributions of all actors, traditional and non-traditional, executive and non-executive, must be recognized.

Work towards a financing framework rooted in shared values and core principles

29. **Work towards a common understanding of the core values and core principles of a post-2015 financing framework**. Working together on a common understanding of shared values and core concepts will facilitate reaching agreement on a post-2015 financing framework. Fostering mutual trust and promoting mutual learning will be a critical part of ensuring a strong common understanding throughout the post-2015 process.

Bring global multi-stakeholder partnerships up to scale and initiate new ones

30. **Scale up existing global multi-stakeholder partnerships and launch new ones**. The renewed global partnerships should be complemented by global multi-stakeholder partnerships. Global partnerships, spearheaded by voluntary coalitions, have proved to be an effective tool to address development challenges. The United Nations can play an important role by serving as a facilitator for global partnerships. It can help to bring State and non-State actors together around a commonly agreed agenda.

Ensure policy coherence and an enabling environment

31. **Enhance policy coherence to advance poverty eradication and sustainable development**. Policy coherence is concerned with the compatibility of global regimes on trade, finance, technology, food security, market access and knowledge management. Such coherence becomes even more imperative with the transition

towards a unified global development agenda and the continued efforts of countries to reduce their dependency on aid.

32. **Work together towards a global enabling environment**. That includes curbing illicit financial flows, ensuring fair trade regulations and fostering financial regulations. It also involves building capacity for the implementation of the new agenda and for gathering data and monitoring and reviewing implementation. Debt sustainability and systemic issues, including the reform of international financia. institutions, will also need to be addressed.

33. **Bring the development cooperation and climate change tracks together**. With climate change increasingly threatening to reverse hard-won development gains, the differentiation between development cooperation and climate change appears increasingly artificial. Concerns about bringing the two tracks together need to be addressed proactively. Differences in the degrees of legal codification in the two areas need to be recognized and statistical methods revised to review the "additionality" of funding for global objectives, such as climate change. Both will be critical to addressing the concern that development assistance is increasingly being diverted from national development priorities to advancing global public goods (e.g. climate change, migration and biodiversity protection).

C. Role of development cooperation in implementing the post-2015 development agenda

Learn from the experience of the Millennium Development Goals

34. **Review the experience of the Millennium Development Goals to channel funds to where they have the greatest development impact**. That experience should help to guide the future allocation of resources and help with their efficient use. When a financing strategy for the post-2015 development agenda is being developed, there should be an assessment of how and where financial flows, such as official development assistance, have resulted in progress towards development goals and targets.

35. **Adopt a people-centred approach to ensure that resources continue to reach the poorest**. The strong consensus on moving towards one financing framework for the post-2015 development agenda includes an emphasis on ensuring the required allocation of resources to poverty eradication and sustainable development. A people-centred approach helps to ensure that resources are targeted to where they are most needed and where they will have the greatest impact.

Review the development cooperation toolbox

36. **Examine the available tools, in the light of changing development challenges**. There is a need, in particular, to put a greater focus on tools that promote integrated solutions, address all three dimensions of sustainable development and promote intergenerational justice. While development cooperation will continue to rely on national strategies as its main tool for matching global goals with national actions, it will also need to find mechanisms to tackle new global development challenges, such as global commons.

37. **Review the mix of resources for the implementation of a sustainable post-2015 development agenda**. A combination of both private and public resources, from both national and international financial flows, will be necessary to finance large

and growing investment needs associated with sustainable development. While raising new resources, the effective use of current resources should also be closely examined.

38. **Reassess the balance between short-term and long-term financing needs**. A greater focus on sustainable development calls for a greater focus on long-term financing, which is critical to overcoming structural barriers. The mix of short-term and long-term financial resources will need to be reviewed in the light of the new agenda.

Ensure that funds are well targeted to have the greatest development impact

39. **Focus public resources on financing gaps, where they have the greatest development impact**. Priority areas for public funds include social services and global public goods, where there is underinvestment, because the social returns of such investments do not provide a full return to the investor. Given that needs are greater than available resources, public investment should also increasingly be directed to areas where it can mobilize additional private resources.

40. **Continue to support those countries most in need**. Many of the most vulnerable countries, including the least developed countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries, are facing the greatest challenges in mobilizing other sources of development finance, such as domestic resource mobilization and private sector external investment. Those countries will need continued support through public financing.

41. **Middle-income countries will need support in order not to fall back into the poverty trap**. Middle-income countries will also require international support to avoid sliding back into poverty following graduation. Capacity-building and technology transfer will be key to supporting those countries in fostering green growth and in tackling growing inequality.

Tap more fully the potential of steady and predictable domestic resources, through improved mobilization of them

42. **Recognize that domestic resources are the most important source of development financing**. Strengthening the mobilization of domestic resources will allow countries to tap much-needed and predictable sources of development finance for the implementation of a post-2015 development agenda. Given the projected stagnation in, and possible further decline of, official development assistance in the coming years, mobilizing domestic resources of development finance will be critical to meeting the additional financial needs of a transformative and ambitious post-2015 agenda.

43. **Address the remaining challenges in tapping domestic resources**. In particular, the poorest and most vulnerable countries, including countries emerging from conflict, encounter challenges in the mobilization of domestic resources. They include tax avoidance, evasion and non-compliance, low taxpayer morale, poor governance, reliance on receipts from a narrow tax base, weak revenue administration, lower revenues from value-added tax owing to inconsistent collection and pressure on tax revenues from trade liberalization.

44. **Invest more in the strengthening of institutions and governance**. Domestic resource mobilization will require the strengthening of institutions and governance.

To date, bilateral donors have not really focused on strengthening the ability of countries to mobilize domestic resources. More funds should be devoted to this effort. However, a focus on strengthening the capacity of countries to mobilize domestic resources should reinforce and not divert attention from other national development challenges.

Continuing important role of official development assistance

45. **Existing commitments, especially the commitment of developed countries to dedicating 0.7 per cent of gross national income to official development assistance, must finally be met**. Official development assistance has fallen in two consecutive years since it peaked in 2010. It represents 0.29 per cent of the gross national income of those donors that are members of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, well short of the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent.

46. **While increasingly overshadowed in quantitative terms by private financial flows, official development assistance remains an important source of funding, especially for the most vulnerable countries**. Not only does official development assistance constitute about half of all external financing available to close the savings gap, it is also unique in its focus on the world's poorest and most vulnerable populations. The projected stagnation of official development assistance from 2014 to 2016, especially in the poorest countries with the largest development gaps, is a matter of concern.

47. **Ensure that aid becomes more responsive to the needs of countries**. The allocation of aid is currently far too often dominated by considerations of political economy. Official development assistance should target geographical and thematic areas that are unlikely to attract other sources of financing. This implies that, alongside a continued focus on social issues, aid should increasingly be directed at issues of global concern, where the benefits to society cannot provide a full return to investors.

48. **Use official development assistance as a catalyst to leverage other sources of financing, thereby reducing aid dependency**. By building capacity and strengthening institutions, development cooperation can help countries to use external resources more effectively and thereby also attract additional development cooperation. Strengthened national capacity can also help to foster domestic resource mobilization and tackle illicit financial flows.

Regional development banks and regional reserve pooling arrangements have played an increasingly important role in advancing development

49. **Recognize the increasingly important role of regional development banks**. Regional banks and development financing institutions have taken on an increasingly important role in recent years in terms of the volume of their lending and their role in shaping regulatory frameworks. In addition, they have serviced a more diversified set of sectors and played an important countercyclical role during the financial crisis.

50. **Recognize the great relevance of equilibrium in the balance of payments of countries for their poverty reduction efforts**. To mitigate external shocks, several regions have set up regional reserve pooling mechanisms, which provide support for

balance of payments during crises and thus complement global countercyclical mechanisms. By providing greater policy space, they enable countries to create a buffer against the negative development impact of external shocks.

51. **Recognize the increasingly important role of Southern partners in development cooperation**. South-South cooperation has been growing rapidly as a source of development finance. However, more information is required to understand its development impact better and to assess its principles and key features. The Development Cooperation Forum could play a role in encouraging Southern partners to improve their information base by supporting analysis and dialogue on South-South cooperation.

52. **Work collectively on a financing strategy for global public goods**. A financing strategy for global public goods must be an integral part of a financing framework for a post-2015 development agenda aimed at both poverty eradication and sustainable development. Sources of international finance for public interest issues and specific global funds for global sustainability issues could be used to fund global public goods. This would imply that some bilateral engagements should shift into multilateral financing arrangements for global public goods.

53. **Explore the example of food security as one innovative example of how global public goods could be managed and financed**. The response to the international food crises provides a specific example of how different actors can come together around a set of principles, provide resources and foster action on a specific development challenge. That example has also shown that financing for sustainable development should be used to foster a two-track approach that addresses immediate needs while also helping to build capacity and stimulate investment to promote long-term development progress.

Private investment is playing an increasingly important role in advancing development

54. **Recognize that the private sector is playing an increasingly important role in the development mix**. Over recent years, private investment has outstripped public resources. Private sector resources are now widely regarded as an increasingly important source of development finance for the post-2015 development agenda. A number of private sector actors have moved beyond corporate social responsibilities and have begun to include development objectives in their core business strategies.

55. **Examine the concerns voiced about using aid as a catalyst for development finance**. The leveraging of the private sector for development has also meant bringing in commercial interests driven by profit, rather than development needs. Envisaging a greater role for the private sector in development cooperation requires a clear understanding of how it can best contribute to the implementation of a post-2015 development agenda. Private sector engagement cannot replace the role of the State in providing a conducive regulatory environment and ensuring access to essential services and public goods.

56. **Recognize that with a greater role, the private sector also needs to become more accountable for development results**. A greater role in a post-2015 setting implies the need for private sector actors to take on greater responsibilities, to integrate sustainable development goals into their core businesses and to become

accountable for achieving development results. One important step is to adopt corporate sustainability reporting and integrate it into the reporting cycle. Such reporting frameworks ensure the transparency of the positive and negative side effects of private investment.

57. **Put in place a robust regulatory framework that goes beyond corporate social responsibility to ensure that private sector investment also contributes to development progress**. Whenever aid is being used to mobilize private resources, a strong regulatory framework needs to be put in place to address market failures. Such a framework will help to ensure that public money used to mobilize private resources has the same, or a larger, development impact as if it had been devoted directly to a specific social cause.

58. **Review the development impact of foreign direct investment**. Private investment can serve as a driver of economic transformation. By promoting innovation and facilitating technology transfer, it can help to generate employment and foster green growth. When using official development assistance as a catalyst for investment, it is important to ensure that it does not provide incentives for investment that would have taken place in any case.

59. **Improve the predictability of private sector investment**. Private sector investments often fluctuate strongly with market conditions. Risk mitigation and thorough investment plans should therefore be put in place and returns made more predictable, to make the business environment secure and guarantee steady private sector flows. That will require effective institutions, strong governance systems and checks and balances on private actors.

D. Monitoring and accountability as powerful tools to advance the implementation of a post-2015 development agenda

60. **Develop a strong, integrated and inclusive framework at the global level to monitor and review progress in the implementation of a post-2015 development agenda**. There was a call at the symposium for a strong, integrated and inclusive global framework to facilitate the effective gathering and sharing of data and hold different actors to account. Such a mechanism must provide the space and resources for the engagement of civil society and other non-governmental actors.

61. **Learn from the experience of the Millennium Development Goals**. The lack of an effective framework and the accompanying fragmentation of different initiatives are often seen as one of the main explanatory factors for gaps in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. Effective monitoring and accountability frameworks are needed across the entire post-2015 development agenda. The Development Cooperation Forum can, in particular, add value in the monitoring of development cooperation and the global partnership for development.

62. **Harness the notion of "nothing about us without us"**. The traditional focus of accountability on donors and recipients should be broadened to reflect better the increasingly active role of a broad range of development actors. The post-2015 era also offers an opportunity to acknowledge and more effectively integrate the role of local governments, parliaments and citizens at large.

63. **Draw upon and reinforce existing mutual accountability mechanisms**. A post-2015 accountability framework for development cooperation should reflect the various levels at which accountability is practiced (local, national, regional and

global). Studies have shown that, where they have been effectively integrated into national mutual accountability mechanisms, parliaments, civil society and foundations have played a critical role in advancing mutual accountability. Experience has shown that the applied methodology of accountability mechanisms is also critical to the success of different mechanisms.

64. **Learn from experience with regional accountability mechanisms**. Regional processes are important in measuring public finances and external aid, transparency and coordination. Important lessons can be drawn from regional tracking mechanisms, such as the Cairns Compact on Strengthening Development Coordination in the Pacific and the African Peer Review Mechanism. The Development Cooperation Forum can play an important role in reviewing the specific strengths of the individual regional mechanisms.

65. **Move towards a multiple accountability framework that recognizes that accountability varies between different policy areas and different actors**. Different mechanisms have codified responsibilities in more specific legal terms (e.g. environmental and human rights conventions). Further work is needed to assess how a joint global accountability framework for development cooperation commitments, based on shared core values and principles, could capture the different roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders. Accountability can be supported by an inclusive process of mutual learning and peer review.

66. **Use the existing corporate sustainability reporting systems of the private sector as a building block for a comprehensive global monitoring and accountability system**. The contribution to and effect of the private sector on sustainable development must be brought into a comprehensive accountability system. Lessons learned from the existing voluntary reporting systems of the private sector, such as the Global Compact or the Global Reporting Initiative, can be used to develop such a system.

67. **Ensure that data are timely, reliable and sufficiently disaggregated**. Good coverage and quality of data are essential for any effective global monitoring and accountability after 2015. Disaggregated data at the global, national, regional and local levels and in terms of poverty characteristics will be critical for formulating effective and well-targeted policy responses.

68. **Explore how new technologies could be used to make data more accessible**. There is a call for a data revolution to provide new avenues for citizens to participate in measuring and monitoring implementation of the post-2015 development agenda, including development cooperation commitments. Co-creation of data by different stakeholders can complement official data collection and statistics. There is a need for better disclosure requirements and open access to public data, especially with regard to the monetary flows of the private sector. Interaction between actors will have to increase to ensure transparency.